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March 21, 2022

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House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 17 - SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, asks the **House Judiciary Committee to amend and favorably report on Senate Bill 17.**

The Maryland Psychological Association appreciates the Committee's efforts to work with all stakeholders to craft a better and stronger bill to protect Maryland's families when there are allegations of abuse. We support the currently amended bill with one significant exception.

SB 17, as currently written, mistakenly states that "child therapy methods" are a "legitimate tool[s] to measure the degree of traumatic impact and the effectiveness of therapeutic and system intervention." [Please see page 3, lines 31-32 and page 4, lines 1-2.] When the child's therapy becomes something other than therapy – such as by incorrectly suggesting it can be a measuring tool – risks the very essence of therapy as a safe place for a child to work on their problems and trauma, if any. There is **NO** literature that we are aware of which supports using therapy as any kind of measuring tool. Furthermore, there is significant literature which shows that therapy can be misused in these situations at the risk of the child's therapy itself and the child's relationship with their therapist.

The Maryland Psychological Association, therefore, respectfully suggests the following amendment – delete everything in Paragraph 12 after the words, "A CHILD WITNESS" beginning on page 3, lines 31-32, and page four, lines 1-2:

Therefore, paragraph (12) on page 3, as amended would read:

“(12) THE TOOLS COURTS CAN USE TO ASSESS THE CREDIBILITY OF A CHILD WITNESS.”

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at exec@marylandpsychology.org if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., JD
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs